

Today there is a growing disparity between the poor and the rest of the population in the United States. Although between 1979 and 1999, the average national family income doubled, the median hourly wage increased by only 60 cents. This means that those people who benefited most from the economy were clustered in the higher income brackets. Often, the people in the lowest income brackets do not have the job skills or access to training to prepare them for the types of jobs that are available in a high-tech society.

Fight Hunger Wisconsin, a consortium of agencies, educational institutions, and businesses working on state hunger needs, reports that the poverty rate for the state in 1999 was 8.6 percent, the thirteenth-lowest rate in the country (Fight Hunger Wisconsin 2000). And although welfare rolls have been reduced since welfare reform was enacted in 1996, Wisconsin's poverty rate has remained stable.

According to a *Media Transparency* article on Wisconsin Works (W2), Wisconsin's welfare reform project, W2 resulted in a 92 percent decline in welfare rolls from 1996 to 1997, the sharpest drop in the country (Wilayto 2002). There was a 50 percent decline from 1996 to 2000. Studies done since then have found that although people may not be receiving welfare benefits, they remain poor. According to the article, a 1998 Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development study found that 38 percent of women who left welfare were not working six months later. Of those who had jobs, 42 percent worked fewer than 40 hours a week and 19 percent worked less than 30 hours. The average hourly wage was \$7.42.

According to the *Media Transparency* article, the first year of W2 had a significant impact in the Milwaukee area. The infant mortality rate rose to 17.6 percent in Milwaukee County; 37 percent of African American infants died that year. The 1999 enrollment in the federal food stamp program fell 32 percent in Milwaukee County. A 1998 investigation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture resulted in sanctions for Wisconsin because the state was failing to meet federal regulations requiring agencies to inform clients of the food assistance programs for which they were eligible.

Even those who do receive welfare benefits find that those benefits do not keep up with the cost of living. Maximum benefits for a family of three declined more than 10 percent from 1994 to 2000. In 1995 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) constituted 28 percent of the family's income; in 2000 it had dropped to 13 percent. Long-time dependence on welfare is associated with children attending fewer years of school and low academic test scores. The Child Trends Data Bank (2002) reports that children raised on welfare are more likely to be suspended from school or expelled. More African American children than any other ethnic groups are likely to live in families dependent on welfare for long periods of time. Among other issues related to poverty in Wisconsin are unemployment, hunger, housing and homelessness, health insurance, and its effects on children.

Hunger

Fight Hunger Wisconsin issued in 2000 a "Status Report on Hunger In Wisconsin" (Wisconsin Food Security Consortium, with the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services 2001). The report relates the following:

- Only 51 percent of people eligible for food stamps received them.
- Wisconsin had the fourth-lowest use of food stamps among all the states.
- Food stamp use increased 21 percent from 2000 to 2001.
- The number of people using food pantries in Milwaukee increased 30 percent between 1996 and 1999, and increased 13 percent from 1999 to 2000.

Second Harvest affiliates help collect, store, and distribute food to nonprofit agencies throughout most of Wisconsin. Funding comes from Second Harvest's budget, participating agencies, donations, and United Way funding. Second Harvest is also a recipient of federal government food surplus commodities.

Food Pantry Users in Wisconsin (2000)

Of 4,000 pantry users in 27 counties, the users have the following characteristics:

Female	75%
Families with children	43%
Single parents	33%
Seniors	19%
Employed	44%
When employed, earned less than \$8 per hour	83%
Unemployed because of disability or illness	35%
Food stamp users	17%

Source: University of Wisconsin Extension (2000).

The agencies running the food pantries and food distribution centers are often churches and community food pantries in small towns. The University of Wisconsin Extension survey (2000) also showed the following:

- 77.2 percent of all the pantries surveyed reported food shortage, primarily of meat, dairy products, and breakfast foods.
- There is a serious lack of emergency food sites in the state's rural areas.
- Transportation and distances are also problems for rural food pantry users.
- Pantries have trouble being open enough hours.
- About 73 percent of pantries have no paid staff and have a continuing problem finding volunteers.
- Many volunteers are over 70 and have difficulty with lifting.

A Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS 2000) summary of emergency food distribution indicates the following:

- 185 state food pantries distribute food received through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is federally funded.
- 350,000 households used pantries from October 1999 to September 2000.
- About 70 soup kitchens and homeless shelters prepared approximately 1.4 million meals during this same time period.

The DHFS 2001 Annual Report on hunger explains the economy since September 11, 2001, is not as vibrant as it was. Because of the donations made to the September 11 disaster relief funds, many local charities are experiencing a decrease in charitable giving from both private foundations and individuals.

The 2000 University of Wisconsin Extension survey on hunger indicated that some people use the food pantries occasionally to get by but that more people are now relying on food pantries regularly. Most people who use food pantries do not use food stamps. Food stamps are more often used by people who are not working (usually because of a disability or disease), than by the “working poor,” although many of these families would be eligible. In Sauk County, food pantries started putting food stamp information flyers in the bags of food they distributed to help make people aware of their eligibility for food stamps. More Wisconsin families were using food stamps in 2001 than since 1996, just before W2 started. This represents an increase of 21 percent from 2000 to 2001.

An economic support manager in Green Lake County reported that 36 percent of the food pantry users there were seniors. She recounted that these seniors would rather use the food pantries, or go without food, than to request food stamps. The DHFS 2001 Annual Report on hunger indicated the Wisconsin Elderly Nutrition Program is well used by seniors. The service is available to anyone over the age of 60 and their spouse, regardless of age of the spouse. Participants are asked to donate what they can afford to pay, but no one is denied services if they cannot contribute. In 2001 the program served 5,396,000 meals, distributed at senior centers and meal sites, and delivered directly to homes. The need for home-delivered meals has grown in part because of the increased number of seniors who are living at home instead of in nursing homes and because of shorter hospital stays.

Homelessness

The following factors contribute to homelessness in Wisconsin:

- Lack of low-cost housing throughout most of state
- Lack of affordable housing located near new jobs
- Difficulty finding employment that pays a living wage
- Lack of public transportation from inner cities or rural areas, where the majority of low-income housing is available, to suburban areas, where most new service jobs are located

A recent report by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (2002) emphasizes the need for decent housing to keep a steady job, and a steady job is needed to pay for decent housing. It is estimated that 20–30 percent of people who are homeless have jobs. But for those looking for work, shelter living makes finding employment very difficult because the shelters often lack a number of items:

- Telephones, making it difficult to follow up on job leads or to receive notification of an interview
- Facilities for bathing
- Laundry facilities
- Storage

People who are homeless often face discrimination not only in employment but also at public libraries. Without a home address, many libraries do not issue borrowers' cards.

Library Cards for People without an Address or ID

Public libraries in Fond du Lac, Milwaukee, and La Crosse all issue temporary cards for anyone who does not have ID or an address. The card limits the number of items checked out to between two and five items. Appleton and Kenosha libraries allow people to use a homeless shelter address to get a library card.

Judy Wilcox, chief for special needs housing at the Wisconsin Department of Administration, calls homelessness a “growth industry” in Wisconsin. According to a *Green Bay Press-Gazette* article (Kneiszel 2001), nearly every shelter in the state reported higher-than-normal demand in 2001. In 2002 the Madison Department of Planning and Development reported the following statistics:

- Eight homeless shelters served 3,437 people during 2001.
- 434 were single women.
- 1,021 were single men.
- 576 families were sheltered.
- The shelters turned away 1,357 people because of lack of space.
- On any given night in Dane County, 1,300 people are homeless, half of whom are children.
- Before shelter users sought public shelter, 58 percent of the families, 56 percent of the women, and 54 percent of the men reported that they “doubled up” with friends or family members.
- 15 percent of families, 17 percent of women, and 28 percent of men lived in a vehicle or on the street before they asked for shelter.

Nationally, about one-third of all homeless people have a serious mental illness. Studies indicate that supportive housing for people with mental illnesses is effective in meeting their needs, preventing them from living on the streets, and aiding them in their recovery. The support includes access to mental and physical health care, education and employment training, peer support, as well as daily living and money management skills.

Ron DelCiello from the House of Mercy homeless shelter in Janesville reported that its clients are having a harder time finding jobs as the economy worsens. Those who have jobs earn wages that do not keep up with the cost of living. The reasons for shelter use include a relationship breakup, a landlord finding out that there are more people living in an apartment than allowed, and no money to pay the rent.

The *Green Bay Press-Gazette* article (Kneiszel 2001) highlighted the problems of the Green Bay area homeless shelters as of 2001:

- Shelters in Green Bay turned away hundreds of individuals and families.
- Many people who are homeless work full time but cannot cover rent when unexpected medical or repair bills come along.
- A worker in Green Bay must earn \$10.83 per hour working full time to afford a two-bedroom apartment.
- If they make \$5.15 per hour, which is minimum wage, they will need to work 84 hours a week to afford the same apartment.

Homelessness affects rural parts of Wisconsin as well as urban areas. The 10-county region served by the Northeast Wisconsin Community Action Program experienced increased demand for hotel vouchers in rural areas. There were 50 requests in the first quarter of 2001, 97 in the second quarter, and it was anticipated that third-quarter demand would be in the hundreds. There has also been increased use of food pantries in rural areas. A poor economy hurts tourism in the northern parts of Wisconsin where there are not many other job opportunities.

Although information on seniors who are homeless in Wisconsin is not available, increased homelessness among seniors is reported by the National Coalition for the Homeless (1999), a result of declining availability of affordable housing and rising poverty rates for seniors. Among all households with very low incomes, one out of three with worst-case needs are those headed by seniors. Seniors who are homeless have a hard time getting around and are often in poor health. They are more likely to sleep in the streets out of fear or distrust of shelters. Almost half have been robbed, and one-fourth have been assaulted.

In Wisconsin an estimated 4,900 to 9,800 veterans are homeless or at risk. The Department of Veterans Affairs perceives a need for veteran-only housing because other veterans can better relate to the struggles that a homeless veteran faces. There are currently only four such facilities in Wisconsin, each having only between 2 and 14 beds available each.

Health Care Insurance

The 2000 Family Health Survey conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (2002) provided information on health insurance in the state, including the following:

- 4 percent of the population were uninsured continuously in 2000.
- 6 percent were uninsured for part of 2000.
- Medicaid covers only about 44 percent of single-mother families.
- 61 percent of noncitizens living in the United States do not have health insurance.

People Who Were Uninsured in Wisconsin in 2000

Uninsured families living in poverty with one person employed full time	73%
Single adults living in poverty and employed full time	47%
Income less than 200% of poverty level	13%
Hispanic	16%
Native Americans	15%
African Americans	13%
European Americans	5%
Farmers	10%
Adults ages 18–24	13%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (2002).

According to a report by Eleanor Cautley (2001) based on the Family Health Survey, about 68,000 children do not have medical insurance, and more than half of them live in poverty. However, the majority of these children have at least one parent who is employed full time.

The *Health Insurance Needs of Farm Families* (Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Service 2001) reported the following:

- People living on farms are significantly more likely to be uninsured than nonfarm residents.
- The rate for uninsured farm residents is 10 percent.
- Occupational risks associated with farming make their insurance very costly.
- Many farm families are not eligible for Medicaid and BadgerCare because of income related to farm equipment depreciation.
- Farmers who have access to group insurance find that the premiums may start out low but then escalate in a few years to the point of being unaffordable.
- Farmers without insurance are not likely to seek treatment for minor accidents or chronic conditions; in turn, this may lead to poor health, with economic impacts for the whole family.

Wisconsin's new SeniorCare medical insurance program is projected to provide prescription drug coverage for more than 160,000 seniors with incomes below 240 percent of the federal poverty level. Prescription drugs are not covered by Medicaid. The lack of coverage for medications forces some seniors to choose between medication and food or rent.

Parents and Children Living in Poverty

The University of Wisconsin Extension's food pantry survey (2000) found that 43 percent of the families using food pantries had children. Many of these households reported times when the children went without food. A study in *Pediatrics* magazine (Kleinman et al. 1998) demonstrated that almost all behavioral, emotional, and academic problems, especially aggression and anxiety, were more prevalent with hungry children.

In 2000, 40 percent of Wisconsin children living with a single mother were poor. Children raised in poverty suffer lasting effects including lower cognitive abilities, poorer school achievement, and impaired health and physical development. Adolescents living in poverty are less likely to graduate from high school. As adults, they have a lower occupational status and earn lower wages, making it very difficult to break out of the cycle of poverty.

The Women Infant and Children (WIC) nutrition program provides food assistance and health screenings for women with low incomes who are pregnant, recently had a baby, are breast-feeding, or have children under the age of five. During 2001 44 percent of WIC users indicated that they were "food insecure," and 20 percent were "food insecure with hunger" at least once during the year, according to a DHFS report (DHFS 2001).

Only 37 percent of schools in Wisconsin offer a breakfast program, placing Wisconsin last in the nation for school breakfast participation. In Wisconsin only 23 percent (44,156 out of 193,812) of eligible children were able to get breakfast at school. Nutritional studies indicate that children who do not eat breakfast are likely to experience problems with learning. A report by Julie Allington (2002), a Department of Public Instruction nutrition education consultant, notes the following:

- Children who ate breakfast at school showed significant gains in test scores in math, reading, and vocabulary.
- Third through fifth graders who ate breakfast at school had reduced rates of school absence and tardiness.

Nationally, the largest growing segment of the homeless population is families. Wisconsin's schools served 17,000 homeless children during the 1999–2000 school year. Almost 40 percent of the nation's homeless include families with children, most under the age of six. According to Allington's report (2002), the following characteristics are common for these children:

- They experience high rates of mental illness.
- Almost half of all homeless children are anxious, depressed, or withdrawn.
- One in three homeless children manifest delinquent and aggressive behavior.
- They experience hunger twice as often as other children.
- They are often in poor physical health.
- They are four times more likely than other children to have asthma.
- Children who experience homelessness are most likely to repeat the lifestyle with their own children.
- Children of color are at highest risk of repeating the poverty cycle.

Medicaid is the most common form of government medical insurance for children, and 58 percent of the children covered by Medicaid live in poverty. Children who do not have health insurance are unlikely to

have a regular source for, or access to, health care and are more likely to go without needed medical care and prescription medication. The *State Health Facts OnLine* (Henry J. Kaiser Foundation 2000) states that 25 percent of Hispanic children are not covered by medical insurance in Wisconsin and that 14 percent of Asian children, 13 percent of African American children, and 7 percent of European American children do not have medical insurance.

Results of the Survey of Library Services to Adults with Special Needs

Special Needs Survey Questions on Poverty

Question	Number of Libraries	
	Responding Yes	Percentage
• Library has added materials in past three years in the areas of poverty and unemployment.	152	52%
• Library has at least one periodical or newsletter intended for people who are unemployed.	136	46%
• Library has a brochure that describes special services for people looking for employment.	65	22%
• Library staff attended training in the past three years on services for people living in poverty or those seeking employment.	24	18%
• Library Web page has links for people looking for employment.	47	16%
• In the past three years, the library has had a planning process that included people who live in poverty, or their family members or agency advocates.	23	8%

Note: In 2002, 293 of Wisconsin's 380 public libraries completed the survey, a 77 percent response rate. See chapter 12 for the complete survey and a summary of the results.

Barriers to Service

Time was most frequently mentioned in the interviews as a major barrier to public library use. Poverty and W2 keep people busy just trying to survive and avoiding sanctions. Many families living in poverty have at least one parent who works more than one job. Travel time is an added problem in rural areas. Transportation is also a serious problem for families living in poverty in both rural and urban areas that have limited public transportation. Often, libraries are not located in low-income neighborhoods in urban areas. Another barrier mentioned in the interviews was a lack of awareness of what the library has to offer.

The staff at the Dislocated Worker Program in Oshkosh noted that many of their clients have undiagnosed learning disabilities and shy away from any educational or learning environment, including public libraries. Also, because many Wisconsin families living in poverty use English as a second language or do not speak English at all, language barriers can overwhelm them in a library. Some seniors do not go to the library because they do not use computers and feel uncomfortable not being able to find what they want independently. Many people do not know that the services in a public library are free and do not perceive them as places to go for free family entertainment. Fear of fines and the inability to pay fines are two reasons families with low incomes do not use public libraries. Alternatives would be valuable.

No-Fines Policies

The library in the town of Merton has made the philosophical choice to not charge fines. Clinton also does not charge fines—just replacement costs for lost or damaged items. When new patrons ask about fines, the staff explains they nag *a lot* but don't charge anyone. The library in Viola stopped charging when someone stole the fine box. Soldiers Grove has a Hungry Hippo bank on the desk. If patrons ask how much they owe in fines, they are told that the library does not charge fines but will accept donations. The staff feel they collect more in donations from people who feel badly about keeping an item past the due date than they would if they had set fines.

The Montfort library does not charge fines or replacement costs for materials. They have a high rate of poverty in the community and feel it is more important to have these families reading than to cover replacement costs. The director estimates that the library has only lost one book under its policy. Florence County also feels it is good public relations not to charge fines or replacement costs. The only materials patrons must pay for are items borrowed from other libraries. For local items, the staff encourage patrons who have lost books to donate a new book from their home collection or to donate a video.

The Shullsburg and Benton libraries also do not charge fines, but they do ask people who return items late to donate food items for the local food pantry. That policy did not work out well in Medford, and they have gone back to charging fines. In Two Rivers, the library only accepts food donations around the Christmas holidays. But they do allow children to earn book bucks during the summer reading program, which the children can use to pay off their fines. Ashland charges fines but does not restrict borrowing privileges, so paying the fine is voluntary.

Madison, Milwaukee, Brown County, Sussex, Monona, and Beloit do not charge fines on children's materials regardless of who checked them out. In addition, Monona does not charge senior citizens any fines. Dane County does not charge fees for people in its home-delivery program.

Several libraries, including Madison, reported that they allow patrons to pay off a certain amount until the fine or replacement costs are resolved, while allowing patrons to check out some materials. In Madison this means that patrons pay a dollar off on the fine for each item they want to check out. Other libraries charge a dollar per visit.

Working Off Fines

Libraries that allow patrons to work off their fines rather than paying them see their policies somewhat as a bartering system. In Elroy, children were allowed to do odd jobs, mostly dusting, around the library to work off their fines. But they did not seem very interested. The staff allowed them to collect pop cans around the library and use that money to pay their fines. There was a little more interest in this project, especially when the young teens found out they could not use the computer if they had fines on their cards. Prescott has a written policy on working off fines that is initiated when a patron makes a request.

In Evansville, patrons have worked off fines by putting a shelving unit together, washing the library windows, and repairing the front door. The patrons seemed happy to provide these services to the library.

Planning and Collaboration

Many social service agencies indicated that they would be able to help public libraries gather a focus group to discuss services and other issues with their clients. The following are among the agencies librarians can approach for help:

- County and urban social service agencies
- Food pantries
- Literacy councils
- WIC programs
- Local homeless shelters
- County extension programs
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Big Brothers–Big Sisters
- YMCA and YWCA programs
- Free clinics

Public libraries could also work with collaborating agencies that address hunger:

- County hunger prevention councils or task forces
- CAP agencies
- Faith-based programs such as the Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Diocesan charities, and Jewish Social Services

One respondent said that at one time the local library provided gift book bags to WIC for distribution, which the staff there appreciated very much. The Polk County Health Department suggested that libraries establish small deposit collections at WIC sites, an idea that could also be helpful at free clinics and at various social service agencies.

Public libraries can offer training for social service agency staff to familiarize them with particular resources their clients may find helpful at the library. Some of these professionals could then encourage their clients to use the public library or accompany them on a library visit. Several agencies interviewed for this section indicated that the only way their clients will go to a public library for the first time is if a staff person takes them there. Many agencies report that their staff do take clients to the library to help them feel at ease and give them tours and show them the location of materials that might be of interest to them. It sometimes takes several visits before the clients feel comfortable enough to check out materials or to go to the library independently. It is important for library staff to become familiar with agency staff who visit the library with clients and to extend a warm welcome to these new library users.

Second Harvest suggested that it would benefit the general public, as well as food pantry users, if the library posted up-to-date lists of emergency food sites and homeless shelters. Another interesting idea was to have a library volunteer make up a collection of recipes that use the foods typically available at food pantries but that do not call for expensive spices and ingredients.

Staff Training

Training could help library staff understand the problems faced by people who live in poverty. Include an introduction to the various agencies in the community that act as resources for families who have low incomes. Agency staff may be willing to provide free staff training.

Public library staff also need to know when a report of child abuse or neglect should be filed and the subsequent process. Warning signs include a child left unattended at the library for much of the day or left without food or appropriate clothing. A possible technique to use when the situation is unclear is to call the local school and talk to the principal, school nurse, social worker, or guidance counselor. If a pattern of abuse or neglect is identified, the school staff can then follow up with appropriate agencies to get help for the child and family.

Collections and Services

One agency reported that the majority of clients who used public libraries primarily went there to borrow the videos and children's materials. The House of Mercy homeless shelter in Janesville noted that the summer reading program is very helpful because the shelter does not offer activities for children during the day and the library gives them something fun to do and a place to go outside the shelter.

Several agencies suggested that public libraries could host workshops on job searching, including Internet sources such as Jobnet, resume writing, and completing job applications. Instructions in completing apartment or rental applications could also be helpful.

Some libraries located in neighborhoods with a high percentage of families with low incomes are the after-school site for tutoring and activities for children. When healthy snacks are added to the activities, the programs address several needs. One WIC professional said that they refer clients to the public library to look at a database of other social service agencies.

In the summer of 2003, the DPI summer nutrition program is planning to invite libraries in communities with a high poverty rate to become a summer food site distribution center for the free bag lunches that are provided for the children. Several libraries participated in 2002.

Accessible Buildings and Services

A higher percentage of people living in poverty are in poor health. The rate of disabilities is also higher. The library's attention to accessibility issues in regard to the building itself, its services, materials in different formats, and accessible workstations and Web pages are all necessary. But perhaps one of the most important things that makes a library accessible to people living in poverty is a welcoming and respectful attitude. Free refreshments were suggested as an encouragement for people to visit the library or attend a program.

Marketing

Word of mouth may work best in a rural area. The staff at one rural county health department indicated that they have mixed results with newspaper articles and radio public service announcements. One respondent reported that because their clients do not have the money to purchase a newspaper, they rarely read one and do not rely on them for daily information. They do however pick up free newsletters and newspapers in grocery stores, so libraries may want to send announcements to these small free press publications. Interviewees said they knew the libraries had information that would be useful to their clients and that once people came to a library the staff did a good job. But the missing link seems to be getting the information about the library's services and resources to the clients. One suggestion was to have library staff present an overview of their services at an agency staff meeting and perhaps meet with small groups of clients. Public libraries could also send materials for posting or placing at agencies' bulletin boards and pamphlet areas.

The Domestic Abuse Services center in Neenah suggested that libraries set aside a few tickets to family or children's events and bring them to homeless or domestic abuse shelters. The people using these facilities may not be print oriented and not be aware of free library programs for their families. Having the shelter staff give out the tickets might encourage some residents to attend the programs. The Dislocated Worker Program in Oshkosh gave this advice: "Food, games, fun, and everything free is a draw for many of the families we serve." This agency also suggested that libraries could create an easy-to-read, attractive brochure to be handed out when people apply for food stamps, Medicaid, or W2.

The agency Everyone Cooperating to Help Others (ECHO) in Janesville stressed that programs libraries currently offer could be very helpful to families living in poverty but that libraries have to make more

of an effort to get information on their programs out to these families by working with social service agencies and sending them flyers, posters, and publications such as bibliographies.

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Additional Resources

National Organizations

- America's Second Harvest. <www.secondharvest.org>; 800-771-2303 or 312-263-2303; A35 E. Wacker Dr., #2000, Chicago, IL 60601. Nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization with a network of more than 200 food banks and food-rescue programs.
- Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). <www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/>; 608-262-6358; University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1180 Observatory Drive, 3412 Social Science Building, Madison, WI 53706-1393. A national, university-based center for research into the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States.
- Meals on Wheels Association of America. <www.projectmeal.org>; 703-548-5558; 1414 Prince Street, Ste. 302, Alexandria, VA 22314. Provides support and leadership for organizations that provide congregate and home-delivered meals services to people in need.

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Programs. <www.nanasp.org>; 202-682-6899; 1101 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 1001, Washington, DC 20005. A primary leadership organization in the field of aging in shaping national policy, training service providers, and advocating on behalf of seniors.

Wisconsin Organizations

Fighting Hunger in Wisconsin. <www.fighthungerwi.com/forum.asp>. A forum to increase awareness of hunger in the state by providing a reliable, comprehensive source of information with news articles, statistics, and links.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Wisconsin. <www.secondharvestwi.org>. Second Harvest is the largest charitable food distributor in the state.

Second Harvest Wisconsin affiliates:

Hunger Task Force of La Crosse, Inc. <www.lacrossehtf.org>; 608-793-1002 P.O. Box 172, La Crosse, WI 54602-0172.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin. <www.secondharvestmadison.org>; 608-223-9121; 2802 Dairy Drive, Madison, WI 53718.

Related Agency:

Wisconsin Harvest. 608-246-4730; 1717 N. Stoughton Road, Madison, WI 53704.

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). 608-266-1865; 608-267-7371 (TTY); 1 W. Wilson Street, Madison, WI 53702.

Bureau of Income Maintenance Administration. This bureau will manage the food stamp program. Responsibility was being transferred to the DHFS from the Office of Nutrition Services and Program Integrity at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development at the time of publication.

County and Tribal Aging Offices. <www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/contacts/COAGOF.htm>. These agencies can answer questions about needs, services, and opportunities for older persons in their communities.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). <www.dhfs.state.wi.us/children/hunger/TEFAP.htm>. This U.S. Department of Agriculture supplemental food assistance program works in combination with other assistance programs to maximize and target limited food and funding resources.

Nutrition and Hunger Relief Programs. <www.dhfs.state.wi.us/programs/nutrition.htm>. Lists the types of nutrition services offered through DHFS.

Wisconsin's Elderly Nutrition Program. <www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/Genage/ELDNUTPR.htm>. Provides meals for people age 60 or older who cannot leave their homes because of health reasons or who are physically or emotionally unable to travel for a meal with others.

Women, Infants and Children program (WIC). <www.dhfs.state.wi.us/WIC/index.htm>. Promotes the health and well-being of nutritionally at-risk pregnant, breast-feeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children, and provides supplemental nutritious foods and information.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. <www.dpi.state.wi.us>. 800-441-4563; 125 S. Webster Street, P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). <www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/fns/cacfp1.html>. Promotes healthy and nutritious meals for children and adults in day care centers by reimbursing participating day care operators for their meal costs.

Community and School Nutrition Program. <www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/fns/content>. Provides nutrition information and program guidance to sponsors of the various school nutrition programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD). <www.dwd.state.wi.us>; 608-266-3131; 608-267-0477 (TTY); 201 E. Washington Avenue, P.O. Box 7946, Madison, WI 53707-7946.

Division of Workforce Solutions. <www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/division.htm>. Develops and maintains employment-focused programs to help employers find the workers they need and to assist workers in finding employment.

Office of Nutrition Services and Program Integrity. <www.dwd.state.wi.us/des/onspi/>. This office managed the Food Stamp program but those responsibilities were in the process of being transferred from DWD to the Bureau of Income Maintenance at DHFS at the time of publication. It is also a liaison between DWD and DHFS, which administers the Medicaid program.

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Network. <www.nutrisci.wisc.edu/nutrinet>; 608-265-2108; 1415 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706. Promotes healthful and enjoyable eating so that Wisconsin's low-income individuals and families receive consistent, positive, relevant, accurate, and effective nutrition messages.

Getting Started with Little Money and Time: Poverty

The following are some ideas for public libraries to use when designing services to address poverty issues.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

- Greet everyone who comes into the library with a smile.
- Review library fine policy.

PLANNING AND COLLABORATION

- If local food pantries or other agencies are having food, blanket, school supplies, toy, coat, or clothing drives, help publicize the activities at the library. Investigate ways the library could participate.
- If there is a summer lunch program for children who live in poverty, investigate the possibility of having the library be one of the distribution sites. Perhaps the lunches can be distributed as part of a program such as a “lunch-bunch” group.
- Consider starting a deposit collection of disposable reading materials in local homeless or domestic abuse centers, free clinics, or WIC sites.
- Investigate possible outreach activities in community centers in low-income neighborhoods.
- Ask a local agency to cohost a computer or Internet training session for families that use English as their second language. The library can provide the training, and the other agency can provide a translator.
- Contact the area food pantries and homeless shelters, and discuss with them local needs and statistics on use. Share this information with the staff and trustees. If a list of pantries and shelters exists, get copies and put them out at the library. Keep one at the reference desk.

ACCESSIBLE BUILDINGS AND SERVICES

- Review the library’s policy on the need to have an address and identification to get a card. Discuss options that could make it easier for people to get a card, yet allow the library to manage potential costs of nonreturned items. This would benefit not only people who live in shelters or on the streets but area visitors as well.
- Investigate pulling together the library’s resources on resume writing and jobs in one place near the newspapers so that people using the classified ads are sure to see them. If a complete move is not possible, consider a display shelf that would change periodically and feature job-related materials.
- Put a short list of common phrases in other languages, along with a pronunciation guide, at the service desk and encourage staff to use it.

MARKETING

- Plan a display that celebrates an important cultural event for a local minority group.
- Schedule a family program that focuses on a minority group dance, food, traditions, and so on. Or arrange for an introduction to the language of a minority group in the community, presented by someone from that culture.
- Plan to celebrate National Food Day (www.worldfooddayusa.org) in October with a display that focuses on hunger statistics and the local need. If possible, become part of a local food drive effort that week. Sponsor a “Trick or Treat for UNICEF” activity.

All Web pages listed here were accessed in November 2002.

